



Summary

Newsletter

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Our Role

The Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre has been specifically established to produce and disseminate data that will assist policy analysts and researchers study the underlying causes of change across rural, regional and remote areas of Australia. Our work will also complement the regional priorities of Commonwealth Government agencies by providing relevant statistical information to assist policy planning and assessment. We also aim to meet the information needs of communities interested in rural and regional affairs.

Access to datasets that are national in scope and coverage is essential for these purposes. The RRSNC will be seeking access to relevant datasets administered by Commonwealth Government agencies and coordinating ABS small area data initiatives to assist with the development of new economic, environmental and social indicators relevant to regional studies and analyses.

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Advisory Group

The RRSNC's research priorities and outputs will be guided by the needs of key users and coordinated through an Advisory Group comprised of representatives of Commonwealth and State Government and academia. The Advisory Group held its inaugural meeting on 6 September 2001. A report of its deliberations will be included in the next Newsletter.

The Advisory Group consists of the following members:

Professor Graeme Hugo	Director, National Key Centre for Social Applications of Geographic Information Systems (GISCA)
Professor John Mangan	Professor of Economics, University of Queensland
Mr Richard Stayner	Principal Project Director, Institute for Rural Futures, University of New England
Ms Linda Addison	A/g Assistant Secretary, Regional Development Branch, Department of Transport and Regional Services
Dr Stephen Beare	Research Director of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
Dr Gerald Haberkorn	Principal Scientist, Social Sciences Centre, Bureau of Regional Sciences
Ms Dianne Peacock	Director, Participation and Learning Section, Analysis and Equity Branch, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
Ms Janine Ramsay	Director, Community Research and Policy Integration Team, Community Branch, Department of Family and Community Services
Ms Joanna Davidson	National Manager of the Office of Rural Health, Department of Health and Aged Care
Mr Gary Sutton	Director, Information Section, Portfolio Strategies Division, Department of Health and Aged Care
Mr Bob Pegler	General Manager, Business Competitiveness and Market Access Branch, Business Competitiveness Division, Department of Industry, Science and Resources

Mr Ivan Neville	Director, Statistical Analysis Section, Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business
Ms Liz Sinclair	Manager, Regional Policy, Department of State and Regional Development, Victoria
Ms Kate Kent	Director, Policy Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania

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Who are we???

The National Centre became operational on 1 July 2001. The team formed to meet its challenges is:

Claire Conroy BA (Hons, Arts). Claire was appointed Director of the RRSNC in January this year and has worked on logistically establishing the National Centre to operational status in July. Prior to this she was the Assistant Director of the ABS Adelaide Regional Statistics Unit and coordinated the regional statistics program nationally. Claire joined the ABS in 1993 to manage the Client Services Branch in Adelaide. Previous to this she has worked as an information manager in both the private and public sector including Imperial College London, Australian Mineral Foundation and Department of Defence.

Andrew Middleton BA (Hons, Geography). Andrew is the Assistant Director of the RRSNC. Prior to this Andrew has been the Assistant Director in both the Mining National Project Centre and the Economic and Social Statistics Unit. Andrew has responsibility for classifications and definitions including production of output on the new ARIA geographical structure. He also has responsibility for the Adelaide Regional Statistics Unit.

Mark Nowosilskyj. Mark is the Senior Project Officer within the Centre and has an extensive knowledge of the regional or small area data holdings available from the ABS, particularly Population Census data. He will be heavily involved in the research, data management and publication program of the Centre. In recent years Mark has been responsible for pioneering the South Australian Regional Statistics publication, the Regional Profiles product and the Regional Statistics theme page on the ABS web site. He is currently investigating the potential of selected data items from the Australian Taxation Office's Individual Income Tax Return data holdings to provide useful indicators of regional economic activity.

Lisa De Bono BSc (Hons, Statistics). Lisa will be joining the RRSNC in November as a Senior Project Officer. Lisa joined the ABS in 1991 and has worked in a number of collection, analysis and technical support areas. Lisa is currently working as a Senior Project Officer in the Household Survey Development and Processing section. Lisa will be involved with a range of projects that involve spatial analysis.

Cynthia Millar BSc (Mathematical Sciences). Cynthia is a Project Officer within the RRSNC. She is responsible for continuing the dissemination of South Australian regional data via consultancies, regional profiles and the annual publication Regional Statistics, South Australia (Cat. no. 1362.4) and will be involved in producing RRSNC publications. Cynthia also has responsibility for managing information about regional statistics on the ABS web site.

Megan DeSira BA (Demography). Megan joined the ABS in 1990 and since then has worked in a number of sections including the Small Area Population Unit. Her primary responsibilities within the RRSNC include the research and analysis of Commonwealth administrative datasets.

Melanie Wilson BA (Hons, Sociology). Melanie began work at the Adelaide office of the ABS in 2000 and has recently completed its Graduate Development Program. Currently, she is on a six-month placement in the RRSNC.

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Forthcoming Activities

While the Advisory Group will assist in nominating priorities, a number of key areas of study have already been identified that will support current research in income distribution, demographic shifts and employment patterns in relation to rural and regional Australia. To achieve this the following activities are proposed:

Short report series—intended to provide an overview of a topic of particular relevance to regional issues together with some analysis of data (both ABS and non-ABS). The reports will promote the range of statistical data already available and show how these data can be used for regional analyses.

Comparable information on the characteristics of regional and remote communities across Australia—a minimum dataset of key variables will be developed which will allow valid comparisons to be made between any regions of Australia.

Collection of new administrative data—investigation for the suitability of Commonwealth Government agency datasets for use in generating regional statistics is a high priority.

Regional data dissemination—the RRSNC will work toward increasing the breadth and quality of data available on the Integrated Regional Database, the ABS' primary vehicle for the dissemination of regional ABS and non-ABS data.

Taxation Data and Regional Statistics

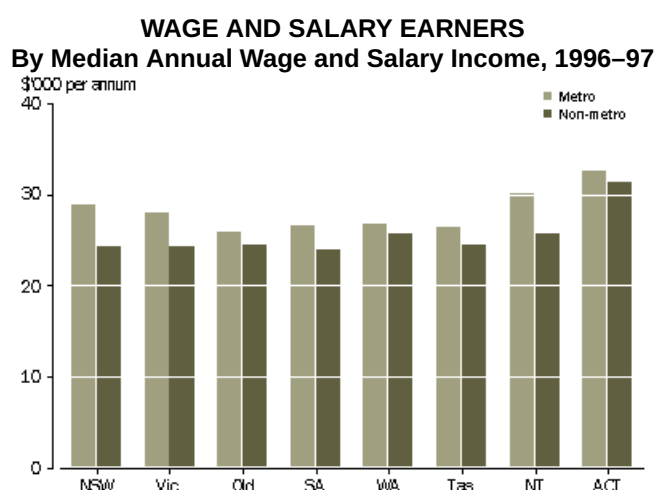
The first Commonwealth Agency administrative data being researched by the National Centre is wage and salary data from the Australian Taxation Office Individual Income Tax Return dataset (ATOIITR). Measures of employment and earned income are being derived for small areas. These measures are seen as useful indicators of regional economic activity.

The ATOIITR offers data on an annual basis. While not directly comparable with Population Census income measures the ATOIITR provides a continuing series for researchers who require information on an intercensal basis. Over time a valuable time series will be constructed.

The output tables, which include profiles of wage and salary earners using wage and salary income, occupation, age and sex, have been validated against ABS Population Census and Labour Force data. The validation indicates that, while allowing for some known limitations in the ATO dataset, these new outputs are generally consistent with ABS Population Census data and are of sufficient quality for release at SLA level. These outputs will be released by the ABS through inclusion in the Integrated Regional Data Base, ABS regional statistics publications, profiles and ad hoc consultancies.

An ABS Information Paper, **Use of Individual Income Tax Return Data for ABS Regional Statistics, Wage and Salary Indicators for Small Areas 1995–96 and 1996–97** (Cat. no. 5673.0), will be released later this year outlining the project methodology and results. Similar data for 1997–98 and 1998–99 is also expected to be released by the end of the year.

An example of the type of data available from the ATOIITR is the variation in median wage and salary income between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. A quick look at the data from the 1996–97 ATOIITR file shows that the median wage and salary income for metropolitan areas exceeds that for non-metropolitan areas in every State and Territory, the difference between metropolitan and non-metropolitan being greatest in New South Wales and the least in Western Australia.



For further information on this taxation project please contact Mark Nowosilskyj (using the details given on the Regional Statistics web pages).

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Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA)

The 2001 edition of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) contains, for the first time, a concept of remoteness. The ASGC remoteness structure is designed not to provide a measure of remoteness for a particular location but to divide Australia into six broad regions of remoteness for comparative statistical purposes. The ARIA methodology has been described in the Information Paper: ABS Views on Remoteness, 2001 (Cat. no. 1244.0) and the Information Paper: Outcomes of ABS Views on Remoteness Consultation, Australia, 2001 (Cat. no. 1244.0.00.001).

The RRSNC intends to utilise this new structure within the ASGC to create different perspectives for both new and existing data. The short report series is expected to contain output based on ARIA.

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Regional Statistics Program

Regional Statistics Units (RSU) have been operating in each ABS Office for the last three years to improve the availability of regional information. The National Centre and the RSUs are complementary parts of the overall ABS regional statistics program.

The focus of the RSUs has been to develop regional indicators at sub-state level in their respective States and Territories particularly through the use of government administrative data sources. RSUs also service the needs of local users of regional statistics, particularly State and Territory governments. RSUs have been particularly successful in this initiative and it is envisaged they will continue to disseminate new information via their well-established annual compendium publications and regional profiles series. The National Centre and RSUs will undertake collaborative projects where appropriate, and the expertise of the RSUs will be used in the development of a statistical framework, the key variables dataset and in other development work.

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Recent Publications

Most ABS Regional Offices now have an annual publication which brings together relevant small area data and disseminates these in one compendium volume. In addition, regional profiles have been developed in several States. The profiles present a statistical summary of key economic and social indicators which can be provided for various geographic areas to meet the needs of individual clients. Data are provided in time series, at a range of geographic levels, and can be compared to data on other regions as determined by client needs. These two types of publications provide information which will allow the comparison of different regions, and to compare a single region over time in terms of social and economic well-being.

Recent releases include:

	Cat. no	Released
Regional Statistics, New South Wales, 2001	1362.1	11 May 2001
Regional Statistics, Victoria, 2001	1362.2	15 December 2000
Regional Statistics, Queensland, 2000	1362.3	1 May 2001
Regional Statistics, South Australia, 2001	1362.4	27 July 2001
Regional Statistics, Tasmania, 2001	1362.6	31 July 2001
Regional Statistics, Northern Territory, 2001	1362.7	12 October 2001 (expected)
Regional Statistics, Australian Capital Territory, 2001	1362.8	18 April 2001

For further information about either the publications or the regional profiles, contact your local ABS Office or visit the ABS web site.

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Where can you find us???

Within the ABS web site we have developed a Regional Statistics Theme Page that contains a range of information from not only the ABS, but also several other Commonwealth Government agencies. The Theme Page highlights the type and range of data that are available for regional or small areas across Australia. We also inform users of recent ABS developments in regional statistics.

The Regional Statistics Theme Page contains only a small subset of the available data. Other regional data (e.g. regional profiles) can be obtained by contacting the appropriate people identified on the respective pages for each State.

To view our Theme Page, just access the ABS web site at www.abs.gov.au and click on the 'Themes' button. Then select 'Regional Statistics' from the list. It's that easy! RRSNC contact details can be found on the Regional Statistics web pages.

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About this release

Welcome to the first newsletter from the Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre (RRSNC). The RRSNC has recently been established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in its Adelaide Office in response to the increased focus on rural and regional issues. The National Centre will build on the regional statistics initiative of the last three years which focused on providing improved regional information within individual States and Territories.